

# Professional and Ethical Issues in Psychology

## Foundations of Practice

W.B. Pryzwansky & R.N. Wendt. (1999). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

A book on psychology with the subtitle "Foundations of Practice" is likely to spark the interest of most counseling professionals, whether licensed psychologists, philosophical counselors, or existential psychotherapists. The overlap of many fundamental issues makes both familiarity with related professions and borrowing from their experiences worthwhile. Unfortunately, 'foundations' can mean a great many things. Such a subtitle could refer to anything from theoretical issues (e.g., adopting a specific paradigm to guide one's practice) to more practical and specific issues (e.g., interpreting and applying the standards of a profession's governing body). *Professional and ethical issues in psychology: Foundations of practice* by Walter Pryzwansky and Robert Wendt takes this second approach.

The authors do an admirable job of fulfilling the promise of their title within their chosen scope, and their work will likely become an invaluable resource to their stated audience: "those aspiring to join the ranks of psychologists, as well as to seasoned practitioners" (p.xii). The main drawback is that the book is aimed specifically at psychologists working in the United States, especially those under the auspices of the American Psychological Association (APA). The book includes chapters on the history of psychology as a profession, the various subtypes of psychological practice, professional organizations (including a brief mention of the BPS), legal issues in the United States, and an analysis of the APA's Code of Ethics. Pryzwansky and Wendt present each of these topics in a thorough and readable manner.

The most relevant information to the non-psychologist is offered in the chapter "Ethical Behavior." While this chapter also relates its topic to the APA code (and a specific reference to the Canadian Psychological Association's code as well), the outline of various methods for making ethical decisions is applicable to any counseling professional. Several approaches are explained in detail with flow charts and outlines summarizing each. For example, the authors discuss the decision-making flow chart developed by Haas and Malouf (p.146). This guides the practitioner through the process of searching for relevant standards, examination of further ethical issues that may arise, and the implementation of the chosen course of action. The methods discussed would probably be most effectively used in the training of new counselors of any variety, but they offer succinct reviews and "ethical roadmaps" for the veteran as well.

Chapters 8 and 11, "Professional Behavior and Accountability" and "Professional Horizons" respectively, may also be of interest. These chapters deal with issues relevant to any counselor, although they too focus on American psychological practice. The chapter on behavior and accountability discusses issues such as record keeping, confidentiality, dual relationships, and other areas of professional responsibility. In discussing the future of a psychology practice, Pryzwansky and Wendt present a particularly enlightening section (pp. 234-247) which covers more personal issues. They discuss the problems of professional and personal burnout and how to avoid them as well as specific strategies the counselor may use to "take care of oneself," both personally and professionally. For instance, they offer the following advice on dealing with clinical failure: "By ignoring failures and accentuating perceived successes, an illusion of grandiosity and importance is created, which stifles the development and growth of the psychologist... [but] allowing oneself to live in a context and culture of failure can open the process of self-validation from mentors and, even more importantly, from peers" (p. 237).

Overall, *Professional and ethical issues* may be of limited interest to many practitioners outside professional American psychologists, yet the book provides a useful introduction for those existential psychotherapists and philosophical counselors interested in understanding another approach to the occupational problems unique to the counseling professions. The emphasis on the APA standards and the laws of the United States detract from the book's relevance to a wide audience outside American psychologists and psychology graduate students, but the authors do not claim to provide anything more.

## References

- Haas, L.J., & Malouf, J.L. (1995). *Keeping up the Good Work: A Practitioner's Guide to Mental Health Ethics*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Exchange.
- Pryzwansky, W.B., & Wendt, R.N. (1999) *Professional and Ethical Issues in Psychology: Foundational of Practice*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

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